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ABSTRACT

The establishment of a small business training and assistance center involves the following steps. First, select a task force to determine the feasibility of establishing a center by conducting preliminary needs and resource assessments. Second, involve the community as early as possible in the planning and development of the center by such means as holding community forums or establishing an advisory council. Third, design the program in terms of: (1) basic services to be provided (e.g., short- and long-term counseling, training, small business management, farm business management); (2) facilities; (3) resources to be provided (e.g., library materials, reference materials, computers, audiovisual equipment, videotapes, and software); (4) referral services to private and public sector service providers; (5) staffing needs; and (6) in-service training. Fourth, conduct internal and external resource assessments to determine what college resources can be provided and what community, state, federal, and private grant sources can be tapped. Fifth, conduct internal and external marketing efforts. Sixth, design recordkeeping and reporting procedures. Finally, develop good evaluation methods and procedures to document economic impact. (UCM)

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OUTLINE FOR ESTABLISHING A SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE CENTER

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OUTLINE FOR ESTABLISHING A SMALL BUSINESS TRAINING AND ASSISTANCE CENTER

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The Oregon Small Business Development Center Network has received many requests for information about the steps necessary in designing and implementing a successful small business training and assistance program. In response to these requests for information, outlined below are some suggested steps on how to set up a center.

I. Select A Task Force
   A. Task force members -- The task force should be small (three to five members, maximum), and should include key college and community representatives.
      1. Vice President or Dean responsible for the program
      2. Key business representative, such as the director of the local chamber of commerce
      3. College representative who can "get things done"
      4. Small business owner
   B. Task force goals
      1. Determine feasibility of establishing a center
      2. Conduct preliminary needs assessment of the small business community to determine local small business needs
      3. Conduct preliminary resource assessment to determine what internal resources (college resources) are available, and external resources (community resources) are available to serve the needs of the small business community
   C. Task force report -- After a period of time, the task force should be able to report preliminary information on the following:
      1. Basic small business needs
      2. List of potential resources available to meet needs
      3. List of potential problems to be solved prior to implementation
      4. Key individuals necessary for implementation
      5. Basic outline of steps necessary for implementation

II. Community Involvement -- It is critical that the community be involved in the planning and developing of a small business training and assistance program as early on in the development as possible. Community involvement is critical to the ultimate success of the program. Without community involvement there is no local ownership in the program, and the chance of success is decreased dramatically.
   A. Conduct local "needs assessment". This needs assessment should provide the task force or planning committee with

complete information regarding the needs of the small business community. The local chamber of commerce, or a local private-sector marketing organization, in conjuction with the college can conduct a research needs analysis survey.

B. Community forum -- One alternative which has been utilized successfully in determining the small business needs is to hold a community forum. Clackamas Community College held such a one-day forum to establish the small business needs and issues, and to identify strategies to meet those needs and issues. The Clackamas forum included key business and community leaders, as well as college staff. The morning session of the forum identified the most pressing needs and concerns facing the small business community. During the afternoon session, basic strategies for meeting the needs were identified and outlined.

C. Advisory Council -- An advisory council, which represents a broad cross-section of the local community, should be formed. The council members should include representatives from:
   1. Small business owners and operators -- These individuals should represent a majority on the council.
   2. Attorney
   3. Banker or other financial representative
   4. Media or marketing representative
   5. Local economic development representative
   6. Chamber of Commerce or other key business leader

D. Other ideas for community involvement
   1. Utilize/include local service groups and organizations, such as Rotary, Lions, service clubs
   2. Involve the "mainstreet USA program"
   3. Include/involve any local networking, problem-sovling, committees or groups involved in economic development or problem solving

III. Design Program
   A. Analyze results of needs assessment
   B. Determine basic services to be provided
      1. Counseling
         a. short term
         b. long term
         c. who will provide counseling
         d. location of counseling
      2. Training
         a. classes
         b. seminars
         c. workshops
         d. conferences
         e. telecourses
         f. self-paced video materials
         g. location of training activities
      3. Small Business Management
      4. Farm Business Management

C. Facilities
   1. Determine best location for Center, such as downtown, shared space with Chamber of Commerce, on campus (Note: An off-campus facility located close to downtown area is most desirable. A downtown location provides proximity to the business community and is perceived as more "user friendly" than being located on campus.)

D. Determine resources to be provided
   1. Library materials
   2. Resource reference materials
   3. Computers
   4. Audio-visual equipment
   5. Video tapes
   6. Computer software
      a. word processing
      b. spread sheets
      c. mail list
      d. inventory

E. Referral services
   1. Develop a "business referral" service to help clients access private sector service providers (accountants, bankers, marketing and advertising counsultants)
   2. Develop "government referral" service to help clients access government service providers (Small Business Administration, Department of Commerce, etc.)

F. Staffing -- determine staffing needs -- potential sources for staff
   1. Private sector
   2. Distributive education
   3. Vocational education

G. In Service Training -- design and conduct in service training for:
   1. Counsellors
   2. Directors
   3. Clerical staff

IV. Funding

A. Conduct internal resource assessment to determine what college resources can be provided -- for example:
   1. From the library
   2. From data processing
   3. From telecommunications
   4. Staff support

B. Conduct external resource assessment to determine what community/private resources are available -- for example:
   1. Donated materials
   2. Donated Facility, e.g. Chamber of Commerce
   3. Donated clerical support, e.g. Chamber of Commerce or other private sector groups
   4. Private sector cash donations
   5. Private sector "in kind" donations of professional services (counseling, training, presentors, accountants, attorneys, etc.)

C. State resources/funding available
D. Federal resources/funding -- for example:
   1. Small Business Administration
   2. Economic Development Administration
E. Grants available
   1. Kellogg Foundation
   2. Mott Foundation
   3. Other private sector foundations
F. Program income -- A well-planned and organized series of training activities can produce substantial program income, which can help fund a Small Business Assistance and Training Center.

V. Marketing
A. Internal marketing -- It is important to conduct internal as well as external marketing. Internal marketing includes informing key college staff about the new program, and soliciting input, and information regarding how the new small business training center can work with existing college resources. This internal marketing is important to avoid "turf" battles as the new program is established. One recommendation is to form an internal advisory committee. Such a committee would identify resources, as well as problems and issues that were important to discuss prior to the implementation of a center.
B. External marketing -- External marketing is probably the most important function in establishing a successful small business development center.
   1. Personal presentations utilizing audio-visual aides
      a. Rotary
      b. Chambers of Commerce
      c. Lions
      d. Service and professional clubs and organizations
   2. Media
      a. newspaper
      b. television
      c. radio
      d. magazines
   3. Direct mail
      a. brochure with program information
      b. fliers regarding indiviudal training activities, such as workshops, seminars
      c. newsletters
   4. Other marketing ideas
      a. establish a "small business of the month" to recognize a small business that participates in the program
      b. establish an award to recognize the individual or individuals who make the most outstanding contribution to helping small businesses in the area
      c. assist with the 1986 White House Conference on Small Business
      d. establish a "yellow pages" of small businesses involved in your program

e. display business cards of the small businesses in your program at the center
f. submit information, articles, ideas to local media regarding small businesses in your program/and general information about your program
g. press releases about noteworthy accomplishments

VI. Recordkeeping/Reporting
A. Design/develop recordkeeping system to track clients and activities
1. This is important to track economic development impact for documenting job creation and profitability
B. Design/develop reporting procedures to record/document, report on center activities

VII. Evaluation -- Good evaluation methods and procedures will help document economic impact, and will provide valuable information for revisions of the small business development center program.
A. Design/develop evaluation instruments to evaluate training activities
B. Design/develop evaluation instruments to evaluate counseling activities
C. Design/develop evaluation instrument to evaluate economic impact of the program

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